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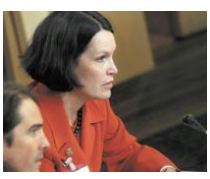
GUTSY REP HITS BACK AT AIPAC

Rep. Betty McCollum Wants a Written Apology or Else



Smear tactics employed by the most powerful Israeli lobbying groups in Washington — an organization recently targeted in a Pentagon spy scandal — has backfired and gotten AIPAC's lobbyists banned from one U.S. legislator's office. Could they finally have gone too far this time, even for our spineless Congress? Well, they went too far for gutsy Betty McCollum of Minnesota. Read Michael Collins Piper's report.

P. 5, AMERICAN FREE PRESS * June 5, 2006 **Behind the Scenes**
with Michael Collins Piper

AIPAC's Smear of Rep Draws Stiff Response

Minnesota's Betty McCollum demands written apology from AIPAC or her office will remain closed to its lobbyists

By Michael Collins Piper

Shock waves recently reverberated across Capitol Hill and among the ranks of the elite group of wealthy families who fund the powerful Washington lobby known as AIPAC — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee — the frontline lobby for Israel. For the first time in history, a member of Congress not only barred AIPAC from her office on Capitol Hill, but also made a public spectacle of it.

Rep. Betty McCollum is a very liberal Democrat from Minnesota — who once even refused to use the phrase "under God" when she publicly led the pledge of allegiance. Rep. McCollum, however, recently took offense when an AIPAC representative told her chief of staff that the congresswoman's "support for terrorists will not be tolerated."

According to many Capitol Hill veterans, AIPAC's lobbyists traditionally feel that they can speak to members of Congress and their staffs in commanding tones.

The AIPAC operative who was implicitly threatening the congresswoman's political future was angry that Rep. McCollum was one of two members of the House International Relations Committee who voted against an AIPAC-backed measure — the so-called "Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act" — that would, in McCollum's judgment, interfere with the ability of the United States to work with the Palestinians.

The Bush administration's State Department shared McCollum's concern that the bill, which would place restraints on U.S. aid to the Palestinians, would be problematic.

Even a number of Jewish groups, such as the Israel Policy Forum, Tikkun and Jewish Voice for Peace, urged Congress to vote against the bill. According to Jewish Voice for Peace, "more than 300 organizations and businesses, including about a dozen small Jewish groups, signed a letter opposing the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act."

The bill was approved by the House on May 23. See page 6 of this issue for the vote.

After Rep. McCollum's chief of staff told the congresswoman of the threats from AIPAC, Rep. McCollum fired off a forceful letter to AIPAC's executive director, Howard Kohr. Then — to the outrage of AIPAC's supporters — a copy of the letter was leaked to the prestigious ***New York Review of Books***. The publication ran the text of the congresswoman's provocative letter alongside an extended article, which concluded that a recent report critical of the Israeli lobby by two eminent academics, based at the University of Chicago and Harvard, "has performed a very useful serving in forcing into the open a subject that has for too long remained taboo."

Describing herself as a "supporter of a strong U.S.- Israeli relationship," Rep. McCollum nonetheless adamantly demanded an apology and took AIPAC to task for its tactics.

> During my 19 years serving in elected office, including the past five years as a Member of Congress, never has my name and reputation been maligned or smeared as it was last week by a representative of AIPAC. . . .
>
> I call on AIPAC to immediately condemn this un- American attack and disavow any attempt to use this type of threat and intimidation to stifle legitimate policy differences. I will not stand to be labeled or threatened in a manner that questions my patriotism or my oath of office. . . .
>
> You and your colleagues at AIPAC have the right to disagree with my position on any piece of legislation, but for an AIPAC representative to say that I would ever vote to support Middle East terrorists over the interests of my country will never be tolerated by me or the families I serve. This incident rises to a level in which a formal, written apology is required. Mr. Kohr, I am a supporter of a strong U.S. – Israeli relationship and my voting record speaks for itself. This will not change. But until I receive a formal, written apology from your organization I must inform you that AIPAC representatives are not welcome in my offices or for meetings with my staff.

Although pro-Israel forces are publicly saying there are efforts to make amends and work out a truce between McCollum and AIPAC, to the point that even a Jewish member of Congress, Rep. Gary Ackerman (DN. Y.) has come to her public support, those knowledgeable of the Zionist lobby's method of operation, based on a theme of "Never Again," believe that whatever accord is reached, McCollum will be in the gunsites of the supporters of Israel. The Israeli lobby never forgets when a member of Congress dares to cross it.

A journalist specializing in media critique, Michael Collins Piper is the author of ***Final Judgment***, the controversial "underground bestseller" documenting the collaboration of Israeli intelligence in the assassination of John F. Kennedy. He is also the author of ***The High Priests of War***, ***The New Jerusalem***, ***The Judas Goats***, and ***Dirty Secrets***, all available from America First Books and First Amendment Books. He has lectured on suppressed topics in places as diverse as Malaysia, Japan, Canada, Russia and Abu Dhabi.

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